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Baltimore Long Ago.





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By

John P. Kennedy.

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LIFE has a double expanse; one in the past, the other in the future: the present is but a dividing line—an isthmus, rather, between two oceans. Our retrospects widen every day; our prospects grow narrow.

I have come to that stage at which I live in the one as much as in the other;—puzzled to say whether I belong most to the antiques or the moderns. Why not confess it? To come smoothly and cheerfully up to the “great climacteric,” is, of itself a glory,—being an honest victory over time, and always a good token of a tranquil future.

The past presents a mellow landscape to my vision, rich with the hues of distance, and softened by a sunny haze, that still retains that tint of the rose—now sobered a little into the neutral—with which youth and hope once set it aglow. The present is a foreground less inviting, with a growing predominance of sharp lines and garish colors wanting harmony. So, I follow the bent of my humor and, for a while, renounce the present, to indulge

my affections in the dalliance of old memories. I detest these babblements of young America, and seek a refuge from its impertinent innovations in a genial remembrance of the older days of our city.

“Earth hath its bubbles as the water hath.” Many break before our eyes, throwing into air their little volumes of cherished desires: many glide onwards upon the stream to meet that fate beyond our view, of which we too plainly see the certain token in the swelling of the brittle globe, and the jeopardy that grows with its increasing compass.

These bubbles have been my study.

It is my fortune, now and then, to encounter some long ripened and—I reproach myself for saying it—some long *forgotten*, object of my early passion, with whom, when every look had a mysterious sympathy that controlled the beat of my pulse, and every word a tone that found a musical echo in my heart, I was wont, in the old time, to dance quadrilles and country-dances. Waltz and redowa and polka had not then invaded the mannerly modest reserve of female toleration. How changed is this same toleration now! Time is a ruthless conqueror! Be on your guard, my good, ingenuous young friends.
Væ victis!

That whilom neat little compend of wit and beauty which once inflamed my imagination by its vivacity and

tenderness, its graceful outline, its aurora blush, its polished forehead, its jetty curls dipping to the round surface of an ivory shoulder—ah me, what has become of all these! Circe has touched that beautiful conglomerate with her wand. Who would believe in the identity of that past vision with this present domestic, motherly face, this superfluous double chin, this short, comfortable figure discreetly draped in supernumerary garments, and these four married daughters, respectable staid matrons,—the youngest of whom I sometimes meet in church with two boys draped like young Albanians! There is a remainder yet, I perceive, of that old roguish sparkle of the eye; and I think I discern the same lithe, well-turned figure, which I once followed with such devotion through the old ball rooms, in that grand daughter who is asking her mother my name,—as I perceive by her curious glance towards me. Not such ticklish ware, my old friend, I shrewdly guess, as in that triumphant day when you fancied you could banish me to the Desert of Arabia, by a frown! My palpitations are not so distinguishable now; and I would venture to remark that you have altogether a more charitable and generally benevolent human regard than when I first knew you.

I can affirm with a clear conscience, that I approach these old time idols without disconcertment, and even with an intrepid memory of the awful intensity of that passion

which I have, more than once, known to endure without intermission for full six weeks. I am even hardy enough now—which, perhaps, is unbecoming my years and ought not to be encouraged—to venture on a comparison between the mother and the grand daughter, with an evident leaning toward a preference for the latter. It is one of the beneficent illusions of age, that we are apt to count ourselves *out* of that march in which the world is stepping along towards venerable eld; at least, to fancy that we go at less speed than others.

I make several epochs in the onward, or rather I should say backward, course of my recollections. One of my earliest landmarks is the epoch of the old Court House.

That was a famous building which, to my first cognizance, suggested the idea of a house, perched upon a great stool.

It was a large, dingy, square structure of brick, elevated upon a massive basement of stone, which was perforated by a broad arch. The buttresses on either side of the arch supplied space for a stairway that led to the Hall of Justice above, and straddled over a pillory, whipping post and stocks which were sheltered under the arch, as symbols of the power that was at work up stairs.

This magisterial edifice stood precisely where the Battle Monument now stands on Calvert Street. It has

a notable history, that old Court House. When it was first built it overlooked the town from the summit of the hill some fifty feet or more above the level of the present street, and stood upon a cliff which, northward, was washed at the base by Jones' Falls,—in that primitive day a pretty rural stream that meandered through meadows garnished with shrubbery and filled with browsing cattle, making a pleasant landscape from the Court House windows.

Of all the functions of municipal care, that which begins earliest and is the last to end in a thriving town, is the opening and grading of streets. Corporate vanity finds its great vent in this exercise. The egotism of the young city runs into streets. It is the only department of government that seems to be animated with an intense foresight for the wants of the future. Taxes get in arrear, schools are postponed, hospitals are put off, but the streets are always before hand.

The old Calvert street came handsomely up the hill, all the way from the wharves to the Court House, and the wayfarer, when he arrived at this point, found himself on the cliff looking northward over a beautiful valley watered by the roving stream which glided smoothly against the granite rocks that formed a selvage to the park belonging to that good and gallant old cavalier, Colonel Howard, and diverging from the foot of the park

came, by a sweeping circuit, through the meadow under the steep and sandy hills that overhung it on the west.

The city fathers had grown tired of gazing over this scene of rural beauty, and had already begun to accuse the stream of an unbecoming departure from the true line of its duty. The circuit was an impertinence which called for correction. The surveyor's chain was already marking out a possible extension of Calvert street over the water course. The work was as good as done. Jones' Falls was whipped out of the meadow as an intruder, and consigned to a new channel cut along the cord of the circular segment which it had pursued before Columbus broke his egg, and the decree was sent forth for taking down twenty feet of the hill on which the Court House was perched.

And now the great question arose touching the fate of this majestic temple of the law. Was the street to give way to the Court House, or the Court House to the street? For a time that question convulsed the councils and the public.

A mighty man in masonry in that day—Leonard Harbaugh by name—stepped forward: a man born to still great commotions of state. He maturely perpended the problem and amazed the whole generation of puzzled quid nuncs, including Mayor and City Council, Judges, Sheriffs and Clerks, with the brave proposal, at his own

risk and responsibility, to preserve the Court House safe and sound after twenty feet were dug away beneath its foundations. The town could not have been more incredulous if he had proposed to suspend the honored building by a magnet in the air. But he was a man of will and confident in his genius, and so went courageously to work.

All the old men, and all the boys, and all the idle negroes visited the work daily. Many shook their heads and watched to see the Court House tumble in ruins, and carefully "stood from under." But, day by day, Leonard adroitly knitted the masonry into buttress and arch, and, in good time, emerged that figure I have already described, of the old Court House quaintly seated upon its ponderous and solid bench of stone. Why is there no full length portrait of the doughty Leonard Harbaugh hanging in the City Hall? Alas, our true men of might find no place in the galleries consecrated to the encouragement of the growth of shams! Both Leonard and his work, the old Court House, have gone into dead oblivion.

The street commissioners came along once more, and decreed another reduction of hill. Another twenty feet or more were required. The Court House had grown mouldy and superannuated; stock, pillory and whipping post had gone out of fashion: Baltimore had become more ambitious. Stately buildings began to engross the square.

The new Court House arose,—a model of architectural magnificence to the eye of that admiring generation, only second to the National Capitol—and the old one was carted away as the rubbish of a past age. Calvert street straggled onward to the granite hills. People wonder to hear that Jones' Falls ever rippled over a bed now laden with rows of comfortable dwellings, and that cows once browsed upon a meadow that now produces steam engines, soap and candles and lager beer.

Still dear to me is the memory of the old Court House. I have a sober faith that the people of the days of the old Court House and the old Court House days themselves had more spice in them, were more genial to the kindlier elements that make life worthy to be loved, than any days we have had since.

The youth of a city, like the youth of a man, has a keener zest for enjoyment and finds more resource for it than mature age. Use begets a fastidious appetite and disgust for cheap pleasures, whilst youth lives in the delight of constant surprises and with quick appreciation and thankful reception of novelties.

Next after the old Court House, and in vivid associations far ahead of it, my most salient memory comes up from the old Play House. We had not got into the euphuism of calling it "the theatre" in those days, or, at least, that elegance was patronized only by the select few

who in that generation, like the select few of the present, were apt to be caught by the fancy of a supposed refinement in the substitution of Greek for the Anglo-Saxon. The Spectator and Rambler and the Vicar of Wakefield supplied the vocabulary of that era, and I think Addison, Johnson and Goldsmith generally followed Ben Jonson and Shakespeare, and taught people to call it the Play House. I dare say the actors—especially the young ones who were proud of their calling and were inclined to strut in speech as well as on the boards—had, even then, begun to naturalize the new word. But there is such a perfume lingering about the old vernacular,—the aroma of flowers planted by it when all the world was fragrant to me—that I cannot give it up without risk of dulling the husbandry which yet keeps these fine odors alive.

“The theatre” would bring me to a later period, when the foot-lights were no longer fed with oil, when the glass diamonds and tinsel had lost their reality, and the stage had begun to reveal its tawdry secrets, to the disenchantment of that beautiful school-boy faith with which I plunged into this weird world of *féerie*.

This Play House stood in Holiday street just where the present “theatre” now stands. What a superb thing it was!—speaking now as my fancy imagined it then. It had something of the splendor of a great barn, weather-boarded, milk white, with many windows and, to my

conception, looked with a hospitable, patronizing, tragicomic greeting down upon the street. It never occurred to me to think of it as a piece of architecture. It was something above that—a huge, mystical Aladdin lamp that had a magic to repel criticism, and filled with wonderful histories. There Blue Beard strangled his wives and hung them on pegs in the Blue Chamber; and the glorious Valentine overcame his brother Orson, by the clever trick of showing him his own image in a wonderful shield of looking-glass, which, of course, we believed to be pure burnished silver; and there the Babes in the Wood went to sleep under the coverlet provided for them by the charitable robins that swung down upon wires,—which we thought was even superior to the ordinary manner of flying; and the ghost of Gaffer Thumb came up through the floor, as white as a dredge-box of flour could make him—much more natural than any common ghost we had seen. Alas, what has become of Orco-brand's Cave and the Wood Demon and the Castle Spectre, and all the rest of those delightful old horrors which used to make our hair stand on end in delicious ecstasy in those days? This reflection gives me rather a poor opinion of the modern drama, and so I do not look much after it. In fact, I suspect this age to be greatly behind ours in these terrible fascinations. Young America is evidently not so easily scared as old America was: it

has a sad propensity towards fast trotters and to that wretched business of driving buggies, which has spoiled the whole generation of young gentlemen, and made a good cavalry officer, just now, an impossibility or, at least, a virtuous exception in one-half of the country. The age is too fast for the old illusions, and the theatre now deals in respectable swindlers, burglars and improper young ladies as more consonant with the public favor than our old devils, ghosts and assassins, which were always shown in their true colors, and were sure to be severely punished when they persecuted innocence.

The players were part and parcel of the play-house, and therefore shared in the juvenile admiration with which it was regarded. In fact, there was a misty confusing of the two, which destroyed the separate identity of either. The play-house was a compound idea of a house filled with mountains, old castles and cities and elderly gentlemen in wigs, brigands, fairies and demons, the whole making a little cosmos that was only connected with the world by certain rows of benches symmetrically arranged into boxes, pit and gallery, where mankind were drawn by certain irresistible affinities to laugh and weep and clap their hands, just as the magicians within should choose to have them do.

Of course, there was but one play-house and one company of actors. Two or more would have destroyed

that impression of the super-natural, or rather the extra-natural, which gave to the show its indescribable charm. A cheap and common illusion soon grows stale. Christy's Minstrels may be repeated every night, and people will only get tired of the bad jokes and cease to laugh;—but Cinderella and her glass slipper would never endure it. The fairy bubbles would burst, and there would be no more sparkling of the eyes of the young folks with the delight of wonder. Even Lady Macbeth, I believe, would become an ordinary sort of person in "a run"—such as is common now. The players understood this, and, therefore, did not allow themselves to grow too familiar. One company served Baltimore and Philadelphia, and they had their appointed seasons—a few months or even weeks at a time,—and they played only three times a week. "The actors are coming hither, my lord," would seem to intimate that this was the condition of things at Elsinore—one company and a periodical visit. There was a universal gladness in this old Baltimore when the word was passed round—"the players are come." It instantly became every body's business to give them a good reception. They were strange creatures in our school-boy reckoning—quite out of the common order of humanity. We ran after them in the streets as something very notable to be looked at. It was odd to see them dressed like gentlemen and ladies: almost incon-

gruous, we sometimes thought, as if we expected to see them in slashed doublet and hose, with embroidered mantles and a feather in their caps. "There goes *Old Francis*," was our phrase; not that he was *old*, for he was far from it, but because we loved him. It was a term of endearment. And as to Jefferson! Is there any body now who remembers that imp of ancient fame? I cannot even now think definitely of him as a man—except in one particular, that he had a prominent and rather arching nose. In regard to every thing else he was a Proteus—the nose always being the same. He played every thing that was comic and always made people laugh till tears came to their eyes. Laugh! Why, I don't believe he ever saw the world doing any thing else. Whomsoever he looked at laughed. Before he came through the side scenes when he was about to enter O. P. or P. S., he would pronounce the first words of his part to herald his appearance, and instantly the whole audience set up a shout. It was only the sound of his voice. He had a patent right to shake the world's diaphragm which seemed to be infallible. No player comes to that perfection now. Actors are too cheap, and all the hallucination is gone.

When our players came, with their short seasons, their three nights in the week, and their single company, they were received as public benefactors, and their stay was a

period of carnival. The boxes were engaged for every night. Families all went together, young and old. Smiles were on every face: the town was happy. The elders did not frown on the drama, the clergy levelled no cannon against it, the critics were amiable. The chief actors were invited into the best company, and I believe their personal merits entitled them to all the esteem that was felt for them. But, amongst the young folks the appreciation was far above all this. With them it was a kind of hero worship prompted by a conviction that the player was that manifold creature which every night assumed a new shape, and only accidentally fell into the category of a common mortal. And therefore, it seemed so interesting to us to catch one of them sauntering on the street looking like other people. That was his exceptional character, and we were curious to see how he behaved in it—and, indeed, thought him a little awkward and not quite at his ease in that guise. How could *old* Francis be expected to walk comfortably in Suwarow boots and a stove-pipe hat—he who had, last night, been pursuing Columbine in his light suit of triangular patch work, with his wooden sword, and who so deftly dodged the police by making a somerset through the face of a clock, and disappearing in a chest of drawers; or who, the night before that, was a French dancing master, and ran

away with a pretty ward of a cross old gentleman, who wanted to marry her himself!

It has always struck me that the natural development of player life has something very grotesque in it. It amounts almost to transmigration. The public knows an actor only on the boards, and there he is so familiarly known as, in fact, to make that his only cognizable existence. We see him to-day in one stage of his progress, to-morrow in another. He is never continuously the same person—often totally a different and most opposite one—so different in quality, costume, deportment, that all identity has disappeared. It looks like metempsychosis. Francis began—or was transmuted into it, at some early epoch of his life—as Harlequin and he grew and grew, through successive states of existence, into a Turkish Bashaw, and finally developed into a fine Sir Peter Teazle, from which full blown perfection he vanished out of the sphere of mortal ken. What was the growth of the man Francis, few persons gave themselves the trouble to inquire, though I am quite sure he had a manhood as worthy of being esteemed as the most of us;—but the gradual evolution of that mythic being, whose nightly apparition before the foot-lights enchanted our merry world, through all the metamorphosis of dramatic development, was as notable and conspicuous, within its orbit, as the career of Daniel Webster. It was the only Francis ninety-nine out of a

hundred knew any thing about ; the only one, we of the younger and simpler sort conceived to be natural or even possible.

The growth of a City is a natural process which creates no surprise to those who grow with it, but it is very striking when we come to look back upon it and compare its aspect at different and distant eras. If I had been away during that long interval which separates the past, I have been describing, from the present, I doubt if I should now find one feature of the old countenance of the town left. Every thing is as much changed as if there was no consanguinity, or even acquaintance, between the old and the new.

In the days I speak of, Baltimore was fast emerging from its village state into a thriving commercial town. Lots were not yet sold by the foot, except, perhaps, in the denser marts of business;—rather by the acre. It was in the *rus-in-urbe* category. That fury for levelling had not yet possessed the souls of City Councils. We had our seven hills then, which have been rounded off since, and that locality, which is now described as lying between the two parallels of North Charles Street and Calvert Street, presented a steep and barren hill-side, broken by rugged cliffs and deep ravines washed out, by the storms of winter, into chasms which were threaded by paths of toilsome and difficult ascent. On the summit of

one of these cliffs, stood the old Church of St. Paul's, some fifty paces or more to the eastward of the present church, and surrounded by a brick wall that bounded on the present lines of Charles and Lexington Streets. This old building, ample and stately, looked abroad over half the town. It had a belfry tower detached from the main structure, and keeping watch over a grave-yard full of tombstones, remarkable,—to the observation of the boys and girls, who were drawn to it by the irresistible charm of a popular belief that it was “haunted,”—for the quantity of cherubim that seemed to be continually crying above the death's heads and cross bones, at the doleful and comical epitaphs below them.

The rain-washed ravines from this height supplied an amusement to the boys, which seems to have been the origin of a sport that has now descended to their grandchildren in an improved and more practical form. These same hills are now cut down into streets of rapid descent, which in winter, when clothed in ice and snow, are filled with troops of noisy sledders who shoot, with the speed of arrows, down the slippery declivity. In my time, the same pranks were enacted on the sandy plains of the cliff, without the machinery of the sled, but on the unprotected breeching of corduroy,—much to the discontent of mothers who had to repair the ravage, and not always

without the practice of fathers upon the same breeching, by way of putting a stop to this expensive diversion.

The little river—the Falls as it was always called—gurgled along with a flashing current at the foot of these hills, washing that grassy cantlet, which every body knew as “the meadow,” over which Calvert Street now flings its brick and mortar, and where the rail road station usurps the old time pasture ground of the village cows. Hard by the margin of this stream, “the spring” gushed forth in primeval beauty, from the curtilage of a low-browed, rustic cottage, shaded by its aboriginal tree, which in time was rooted up, to be supplanted by the pillared dome which now lingers a forsaken relic, dependant upon the slow charity of the City fathers to save it from pick-axe and spade and the overwhelming masonry of modern improvement.

The stream, in its onward flight from this point, eddied under the high bank that supported the Court House, and, turning swiftly thence, foamed and dashed at the base of a precipice, on the top of which stood the Presbyterian Church,—only lately resolved into its original dust, to make room for the new Court-room, which Uncle Sam, quite regardless of the threat of Mr. Jefferson Davis to liberate Maryland, is fast rearing up to administer the laws of the “more perfect Union,” which rebellion has been so savagely intent upon making more imperfect.

These are some of the more noteworthy changes which have crept over the physical aspect of the City. Those in its moral and social aspect are even more observable. As communities grow in density and aggregation, the individuality of men diminishes. People attend to their own concerns and look less to their neighbors. Society breaks into sects, cliques and circles, and these supersede individuals. In the old time, society had its leaders, its models and dictators. There is always the great man of the village;—seldom such a thing in the City. It was the fashion then to accord reverence and authority to age. That is all gone now. Young America has rather a small opinion of its elders, and does not patronise fathers and mothers. It knows too much to be advised, and gets, by intuition, what a more modest generation found it hard enough to get by experience. If we could trace this notion through all its lodgments, we should find that this want of reverence and contempt of obedience is the deepest root of this mad rebellion.

Baltimore had passed out of the village phase, but it had not got out of the village peculiarities. It had its heroes and its fine old gentlemen, and its accomplished lawyers, divines and physicians, and its liberal, public-spirited merchants. Alas! more then than now. The people all knew them and treated them with amiable

deference. How sadly we have retrograded in these perfections ever since!

Society had a more aristocratic air than now—not because the educated and wealthy assumed more, but because the community itself had a better appreciation of personal worth, and voluntarily gave it the healthful privilege of taking the lead in the direction of manners and in the conducting of public affairs. This was, perhaps, the lingering characteristic of colonial life, which the revolution had not effaced,—the, as yet, unextinguished traditional sentiment of a still older time—of which all traces have been obliterated by the defective discipline of succeeding generations.

The retrospect which carries me back to that jocund time, when I admired and loved that old society, is full of delight and sadness. I have a long score of pleasant recollections of the friendships, the popular renowns, the household charms, the *bonhomme*, the free confidences and the personal accomplishments of that day. My memory yet lingers with affectionate delay in the wake of past notabilities, male and female, who have finished their voyage and long ago, I trust, found a safe mooring in that happy haven, where we fondly expect to find them again when we ourselves shall have furled our sails and secured an anchorage on that blessed shore. Bating the ravages which time has made in the ranks of my compeers

and comrades, it is a precious bit of the field of human life to contemplate. But those ravages! How few of the glories of that day remain. Some cord has snapped every year—even, as we advance, every month;—and, at each break, a dear friend, a familiar face, a genial form, upon which we were wont to hang our affections like garlands, has dropt out of sight and become a memory. A few sea-worn barks still sail on.

I grow too serious for the cheerful theme which my outset promised. Let me get back to my appointed task.

It was a treat to our ancestors to look upon this little Baltimore town springing forward with such elastic bound to be something of note in the Great Republic. They saw it just after the war of the Revolution, giving its first promise—a bustling, ambitious, I might say, rollicking young aspirant for municipal honors—growing rapidly, like a healthy boy, fat and frolicsome, and bursting incontinently out of his clothes in spite of all allowance of seam and selvage. Market Street (this has grown obsolete now—they call it Baltimore Street,) had shot like a snake out of a toy box, up as high as Congress Hall, (I forgot that Congress Hall, which stood between Sharp and Liberty, has also vanished,) with its variegated range of low-browed, hip-roofed wooden houses, standing forward and back, out of line, like an ill-dressed regiment,—as a military man would say. Some houses

were painted blue, some yellow, some white, and, here and there, a more pretending mansion of brick, with windows after the pattern of a multiplication table, square and many-pained, and great wastes of wall between the stories; some with court-yards in front, and trees in whose shade truant boys and ragged negroes "skyed coppers" and played at marbles.

This avenue was enlivened with matrons and damsels; some with looped-up skirts, some in brocade luxuriantly displayed over hoops, with comely boddices supported by stays disclosing perilous waists, and with sleeves that clung to the arm as far as the elbow, where they were lost in ruffles that stood off like the feathers of a bantam. The whirligig of time has played its usual prank and brought these ghosts of the past back into the very same avenue. And then, such faces! so rosy, spirited and sharp;—with the hair drawn over a cushion—(they called it neither 'cat' nor 'rat,' my dear young lady, but simply by the name I give it)—tight enough to lift the eyebrows into a rounder curve, giving a pungent, supercilious expression to the countenance; and curls that fell in "cataracts" upon the shoulders, (much prettier, my pretty friend, than those netted 'beaver tails' you fancy.) Then, they stepped away in such a mincing gait, in shoes of many colors with formidable points at the toes and high tottering heels delicately cut in wood, and in towering

peaked hats, garnished with feathers that swayed aristocratically backward and forward at each step, as if they took pride in the stately paces of the wearer.

In the train of these goodly groups came the gallants who upheld the chivalry of the age;—cavaliers of the old school, full of starch and powder: most of them the iron gentlemen of the Revolution, with leather faces—old campaigners, renowned for long stories,—not long enough from the camp to lose their military *brusquerie* and dare-devil swagger; proper, roystering blades who had not long ago got out of harness and begun to affect the elegancies of civil life. Who but they!—jolly fellows, fiery and loud, with stern glance of the eye and brisk turn of the head, and swash-buckler strut of defiance, like game cocks, all in three cornered cocked-hats and powdered hair and cues, and light-colored coats with narrow capes and long backs, and pockets on each hip, small clothes and striped stockings, shoes with great buckles, and long steel watch chains suspending an agate seal, in the likeness to the old sounding boards hung above the pulpits. And they walked with such a stir, striking their canes upon the pavement till it rang again. I defy all modern coxcombry to produce any thing equal to it. There was such a relish of peace after the war, so visible in every movement. It was a sight worth seeing, when one of these weather-beaten gallants accosted a lady

on the street. There was a bow which required the whole width of the pavement, a scrape of the foot and the cane thrust with a flourish under the left arm and projecting behind in a parallel line with the cue. And nothing could be more piquant than the lady's return of this salutation, in a curtsy that brought her, with bridled chin and a most winning glance, half way to the ground. And such a volume of dignity!

It was really a comfort to see a good housewifely matron of that merry time, trudging through town in bad weather, wrapped up in a great 'roquelaire,' her arms thrust into a huge muff, and a tippet wound about her neck and shoulders in as many folds as the serpent of Laocoon, a beaver hat close over her ears, and her feet shod in pattens that lifted her above all contact with mud and water, clanking on the sidewalks with the footfall of the spectre of the Bleeding Nun.

Even the seasons were on a scale of grandeur unknown to the present time. There were none of your soft Italian skies and puny affectation of April in December. But winter strutted in, like a peremptory bandit on the stage, as one who knew his power and wasn't to be trifled with, and took possession of sky and field and river in good earnest, flinging his snowy cloak upon the ground as a challenge to all comers, determined that it should lie there until he chose to take it up and continue his

journey. And the nights seemed to be made on purpose for frolics—they were so bright and crisp, and so inviting to the jovial spirits of the time who, crowded in sleighs, sped like laughing phantoms over every highway, echoing back the halloos of groups of boys that, at every street corner greeted them with volleys of snow-balls. And the horse-bells jangling the music of revelry from many a near and many a distant quarter, told of the universal mirth that followed upon the track of the old-fashioned winter.

Baltimore has altered since those merry days. It has grown up, since then, from a jovial, bustling little town into the dimensions of a fair city. The stages of that growth have been rapidly passed. Every year has witnessed a visible encroachment of the suburbs on the surrounding country, and every score of years the doubling of the number of the inhabitants. To my perception, the departure of each generation carried with it some precious remainder of the quality which made Baltimore an abode to be chosen by those who seek “to cast their lines in pleasant places.”

It is no querulous temper nor predilection of age which prompts me to say that the later time has not repaired the losses of the old. I would not offend the present by comparison with the past: I simply note a fact in which, perhaps, some calm thinker may find a useful moral.

There was more public spirit in the young Baltimore than in the grown up City, and it was nursed by nobler men. There was a grander race of merchants in those days;—don't be offended, my worthy friends of the Exchange, there is a broad space below the top line of that old company, which may be occupied without disparagement to your respectability;—they were larger in their views, and larger in their hearts,—gave more time and money to public enterprise, were more elegant and more generous in their convivialities, more truly representative of a refined upper class, more open of hand and more kind to the world, than any society we have had since. I speak of society as an aggregate, because I desire to leave room for individual exceptions in which the old spirit survives. They were of the Venetian stamp, and belonged to the order of what the world calls merchant princes;—not so much in magnificence as in aim and intention. What a roll could I call of those departed spirits who made their names the favorite household memories of Maryland and famous in the history of commercial venture in every port of Europe, and down along the coasts of either continent “to utmost Indian isle.”

And then, passing from the merchants to the old Bench and Bar—what a galaxy of talent and learning and eloquence was there! What grand, joyous, keen-witted, sparkling good fellows got together in that old

Court House and the new!—on such good brotherly terms with each other, so proud of each other; and in that little Academy of Themis, numbering not over some two or three score of barristers, judges, clerks, students and all, such an extraordinary proportion of notabilities, of renown throughout the nation—enough to give a reputation to half a dozen cities.

We had divines and physicians, too, who could face all the colleges of to-day and make them envious of the excellence which their most eager ambition would be satisfied to attain for themselves. Certainly, the City now fails in its emulation of that old time vigor of mental activity which made the former Baltimore so note-worthy in all its departments of municipal life. But this is casual and may be better by and by. Men of mould come in cycles, and we are in apogee just now. Wait awhile, and the wheel of time will bring better conditions around again. I prophecy something good from this great cataclysm of rebellion, which seems to be the travail of a healthful purification and the dawn of a new life for Baltimore. We are undergoing a very stern and solemn reformation which, if I mistake not, will evolve much new faculty with much prolific opportunity, in the future.

What is notable now is, that the City is care-worn and contentious. It is unpleasantly characterised by a struggle between generosity and selfishness:—many ready

to give every thing and do every thing for the sake of the country in its need; many who will give and do nothing. It is cloven by faction, and it is more than the true men and women can do, by any persuasion or example, to keep it on decent terms of social toleration. There are sorrowful variances amongst us. Dissension has crept up to the verge of the altars, and invaded the firesides of the City, tainting both with an infection that good Christians are not accustomed to allow in such sanctuaries. Rebellion has vitiated the atmosphere of the market place, and flaunts its symbols on the street. Old friends keep apart, pass with unpleasant glances, or converse together without a topic and with a strange constraint. There was one point three years ago, upon which they had a difference of opinion—and this was a fountain of discord. What was it? Reducing the cause of quarrel to its simple element, as we sift it out of the protocols or counter-propositions which preluded the breaking out of this insane civil war, in the discussions of the opposing parties in Congress, it was neither more nor less than this:—Shall we have the privilege to plant Slavery in the bosom of the new communities which, in future time, are to inhabit that broad domain lying between the Lakes and the Rocky Mountains, and condemn that coming empire to endure the curse which, in old time, we complained against Great Britain for inflicting upon us?

The nation said no. And, thereupon, many in Baltimore thought there was sufficient reason for destroying our Great Republic! Marvellous, that any man or woman in Baltimore should even grow angry upon such a privation as this! Then, as the war goes on, things, of course, get worse; for rebellion is always creating new exasperations: it is, in its mildest type, a rough experiment, and not at all, as romantic young ladies think, sprinkled with rose-water. And so, we divide and become unhappy. Perhaps time will clear away the mist, and people, in Maryland at least, will see the folly of fighting for slavery in the Rocky Mountains and, in the end, the nation grow the stronger and the purer for this outbreak.

I perceive I am rambling towards a topic that might carry me into a long discourse. So I come to a halt, lest I should destroy the flavor of these kindly memories I would fain preserve for the pleasure of those who like to hear of Baltimore Long Ago.

